

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 DHA-05 TRSE-00 SSM-03 EA-10 IO-13 /088 W
-----081468 140347Z /15

R 131650Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9395
INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMEBASSY JIDDA
USMISSION SINAI
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 15272

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, EG
SUBJ: COPTIC DISQUIET: GOE TAKES FURTHER STEP

REF CAIRO 15138 AND PREVIOUS,

1. AUSTRALIAN EMB COLLEAGUE MET WTH COPTIC BISHOP IN POPE SHANUDA'S OFFICE SEP 13, ONE DAY AFTER MODESTLY PUBLICIZED CALL BY PM SALIM ON POPE ON OCCASION COPTIC NEW YEAR.

2. ACCORDING TO AUSTRALIAN, PRINCIPAL OUTCOME OF SALIM-SHANUDA MEETING WAS GOE AGREEMENT THAT PROPOSED APOSTASY LAW, A MAJOR FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TO PRESENT COPTIC CONCERNS, WILL NOT REACH FLOOR OF PA. BISHOP SAID COPTIC HIERARACHY HAD CONVEYED ITS FEARS ON APOSTASY LAW TO GOE AND HAD RECEIVED ASSURANCES THAT LAW WOULD NOT BE ENFORCED IF IT PASSED, AS WAS CASE WITH MUSLIM-INSPIRED ALCOHOL "BAN" LAST YEAR. COPTS COUNTERED THAT APOSTASY LAW MUCH MORE SENSITIVE ISSUE, AND GOE COULD LOSE CONTROL. IF VOTED UPON BY PA, IT WOULD BE ENACTED AND ENFORCED. COPTS FURTHER ARGUE THAT GOE HAD NEARLY LOST CONTROL OF DRINKING LAW. SALIM CAVED.

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3. BISHOP, AUSTRALIAN REPORTS, ATTRIBUTED RECENT TENSIONS TO VARIETY OF FACTORS: RAMADAN ATMOSPHERE, MUSLIM EXTREMISTS ACTING ON THEIR OWN, ANTI COPTIC ACTS IN FAYUM, ASSIUT AND SOHAG, AND, PARTICULARLY, TO COPTIC CONCERNS OVER APOSTASY LAW. ACCORDING BISHOP, LAW WOULD HAVE MEANT THAT CHILDREN OF "MUSLIMS OF EXPEDIENCY" WOULD HAVE BEEN SUBJECT TO LAW IF

THEY ATTEMPTED PRACTICE CHRISTIAN FAITH. ADDITIONALLY, ONLY TWO MUSLIM WITNESSES WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT PROOF IN COURT OF RECANTING, AND EVEN COUNSELLING, E.G. PREIST SUGGESTING TO WAVERING COPT THAT HE SHOULD NOT BECOME MUSLIM, ALL FELL WITHIN PROVISIONS OF ACT.

4. BISHOP CLAIMED PRESENT SITUATION WOULD IMPROVE AND CITED EXAMPLE OF QUIET POLICE STUP OF OF SECURITY FOR COPTS IN RECENT DAYS. HOWEVER, BISHOP ENDED MEETING WITH REQUEST THAT AUSTRALIANS EASE IMMIGRATION REQUIREMENTS FOR COPS "WHO MAY NOW BE IN TROUBLE OR UNDER THREAT OF DEATH." (AUSTRALIAN ASKED THAT THIS RQUEST BE CLOSELY HELD.)

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH PRESS HAS TREATED SHANUDA-SALIM MEETING IN LOW KEY AND NOT LINKED IT TO PRESENT UNREST, IMPLICATION THAT GOVT CONCERNED IS CLEAR. WORD SUE TO SPREAD QUICKLY IN COPTIC COMMUNITY AND MAY HELP EAST TENSIONS. NEVERTHELESS, REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHAT ACTIONS GOE PLANS TO TAKE AS VISIBLE SIGN THAT IT WILL NOT TOLERATE FURTHER VIOLENCE FROM EITHER SIDE.
EILTS

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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Review Transfer Date:
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SAS ID: 1299607
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Status: NATIVE
Subject: COPTIC DISQUIET: GOE TAKES FURTHER STEP
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, EG
To: STATE
Type: TE
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